Opportunities to Respond in Inclusive Preschool Environments: The What, Why, and How

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Who are we??

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Who are you??

• Researcher?
• Special Educators?
• General Educators?
• Speech-Language Pathologists?
• Related Service Providers?
• Caregivers or Parents?

By the end of this session, we hope you can…

1. Describe the importance, the purpose, and the types of opportunities to respond (OTRs) to support development for young children with disabilities

2. Summarize the frequency and types of OTRs used within naturally-occurring routines in a sample of inclusive preschool settings

3. Identify strategies for incorporating OTRs to promote access, participation, and learning within inclusive environments
“The What”
The Purpose and Types of Opportunities to Respond (OTRs)

What does it look like in action?

- **Adult-Led OTRs**
  - Seeking a response that is not related to the specific attentional focus of a child and/or what they are engaging with

- **Child-Led OTRs**
  - Seeking a response from a child that is related to the child’s attentional focus and/or what they are engaging with

- **Increasingly supportive OTRs for language learning**
  - Open-ended
  - Choice
  - Yes/No
  - Imitation

From our work in inclusive classrooms, we have some preliminary evidence that adults in free play use MORE YES/NO QUESTIONS than other OTRs (i.e., open-ended, choice, and imitation) with children with autism.

**Really? So, how many?!?!?**

In a 15 minute period during free play, educators, on average, asked about 20 yes/no questions, with a range of 5 to 54...
It’s more than just a yes/no question...

- Tell a student playing with a baby, “Get the bottle and give the baby a drink.”
- Model stomping your feet and saying “Let’s be dinosaurs.”
- Build a pattern with the blocks and say, “Tell me what comes next.”
- Gesture for a student to come over to play in your area with another student.
- Say “It’s time for...[pause and wait]” and show a picture of circle time to prompt the response.

“The Why”
The Importance of Opportunities to Respond (OTRs) and What We Know about Current Use

Recommendations and Reasons
Children with disabilities need exposure to regular, frequent, contextually relevant, naturally occuring learning opportunities that are at least commensurate with, if not more than, their typically developing peers.

~AND~
It has been recommended that educators use 4 - 6 OTRs per minute.

Whoa, that seems like a lot. So, why?

(Barton & Smith, 2015; Council for Exceptional Children, 1987; DEC/NAEYC, 2009)
How do OTRs promote skill acquisition?

- **Antecedent**: Opportunity to Respond
- **Behavior**: Child answers question
- **Consequence**: Reinforcement provided

**Promotes Active Engagement...**

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<td>Child Led Responsive Action</td>
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**Promotes Active Engagement**

- Results from Project Engage are being analyzed to see if frequency of adult interaction practice use corresponds to engagement:
  - For target children who have disabilities
  - Classwide percentage of students’ engaged
  - Across Small Group, Large Group and Exploratory Play

By engaging students through providing OTRs, students can participate in large group activities (i.e., circle time) and practice skills they need throughout their preschool day (i.e., IEP goals)
Promotes Language and Ongoing Interactions

**ANTecedent**
Opportunity to Respond

**BEHAVIOR**
Child uses language

**CONSEQUENCE**
Reinforcement provided paired with another OTR (antecedent)

**BEHAVIOR**
Child communicates through language

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“**The How**”
Recommendations for Using Them in Your Classroom

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**Important Consideration about OTRs**

According to Greenwood, Delquadri, and Hall (1984), an opportunity to respond (OTR) is defined as “the interaction between: (a) educator formulated instructional antecedent stimuli (i.e., the material presented, prompts, questions asked, signals to respond, etc.) and....

(b) their success in establishing the academic responding desired or implied by the materials" (p. 64).

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**And, you want the OTR to be successful in getting the child to respond...**

- Provide an appropriate amount of wait time for the student to respond
  - Consider at least 3-7 seconds depending on the child’s needs

- Say it once, wait, and consider phrasing it a different way if a child doesn’t respond
  - System of Least Prompts

[Doyle, Wolery, Ault, & Gast, 1988; McDuffie & Yoder, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978]
More ways to make the OTR successful...

- Be intentional about the types and frequency of OTRs provided
- Work within the child’s developmental range, so they experience success, but also some challenge – Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)
- Provide reinforcement after the child responds and then another OTR as appropriate to continue or sustain the interaction
- Provide a variety of ways for students to respond (i.e., pictures, gestures, devices)

[Doyle, Wile, Ault, & Gust, 1988; McArthur & Yoder, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978]

So, you want to use a variety of OTRs that are successful in...

So, you want to use a variety of OTRs that are successful in...

- Promoting Active Engagement
  - “Thumbs up if you had the same idea or thumbs down if you had a different idea.”
  - Ask questions during a turn-taking game (e.g., “Who’s turn is it?” or “Which card do you think he has?”).
  - If a child is wandering, approach with two items in your hand and offer a choice.

- Promoting Pre-Academic Skills
  - “Do what I do” while you point to and label body parts
  - With each child holding a small picture of something from the book, have children hold up the picture when they have the corresponding word used in the story.
  - Using a visual schedule of the steps to an art project, ask children, “What’s next?” or “Can you help me to know what to do next?”

- Promoting Language Learning
  - “Turn to your neighbor and tell them . . .” (favorite color, favorite animal, etc.)
  - During a story, ask students a question with a verbal choice (e.g., “Is that a big dog or a little dog?”)

Tip Sheet

Walking out with a plan...

- Chat with your neighbor!
- Think about a student in your classroom or a child for whom you are a caregiver
- Identify at least 5 OTRs you could use to promote engagement, language learning, or pre-academic skills
  - Consider the child’s skill level
  - Consider the child’s IEP goals
  - Consider how it can be embedded into your routines (e.g., large group, small group, play, outside, snack)

Questions? Comments? Random Thoughts?

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Learn more about Project ENGAGE
Visit us at https://innovation.umn.edu/engage-kids/
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References